

Returning to the Workplace Guidance for Employees

Purpose

In preparation for returning the state's workforce back to onsite locations agencies should exercise flexibility when developing an agency plan to safely return employees to the workplace in accordance with this guidance. No singular approach will work for all divisions; therefore, management and leadership should carefully review draft plans together before implementation.

While steps should be taken to return the workforce to as near as it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies should also continue to utilize the expanded technology and alternative methods of operating, where appropriate and feasible. Telecommuting may be considered if feasible to meet the operational needs of the agency.

Employees are expected to comply with the following guidelines regardless of vaccination status.

The content within this guidance applies to State of Delaware (State) Executive Branch cabinet agency employees. Other employers of State personnel may choose to adopt these provisions as well unless required by CDC or public health officials to have more restrictive guidance. Non-cabinet agency personnel should contact their supervisors to determine whether their employer has adopted these provisions.

Returning to the Worksite

Employees will begin to return to the worksite in a phased approach beginning no later than May 24, 2021, with a goal that all employees will be either returned to the workplace or have approved telecommuting agreements completed no later than September 3, 2021.

The following should be considered when creating agency return to the worksite plans:

- Employees whose essential job functions are difficult to perform from home or those who have private offices may be considered for returning to on-site work first.
- Employees should discuss with managers concerns which may require flexibility for remote work when necessary to address child care, including remote learning, or COVID-19 health-related issues. Employees continuing to telecommute after September 3, 2021, are required to have an approved telecommuting agreement on file. Approval for telecommuting is at the sole discretion of management and is not subject to appeal or grievance. Telecommuting policies, procedures and forms can be found under [DHR's Policies and Procedures](#).

Screening

Employee screening and self-monitoring is essential to early detection and ensuring workplaces remain safe. Some facilities may require screening prior to entry by employees and the public.

Employees should self-monitor prior to entering the workplace for the following symptoms to identify the early indicators of COVID-19:

- Do you have a fever above 100.4 degrees?
- Do you have a cough unrelated to known underlying causes (asthma, COPD, chronic sinusitis, etc.)?
- Do you have shortness of breath unrelated to known underlying causes (asthma, COPD, chronic sinusitis, etc.)?
- Do you have body aches or pains, severe sore throat, headache?
- Do you have loss of taste or smell?

If the response to any of these questions is yes, employees should not report to work, follow their worksite's call-out procedures and contact their healthcare provider. Employees may be sent home by agency management, in consultation with human resources, if there is a belief that the employee has symptoms associated with COVID-19.

Personal Safety Measures

Agencies may develop procedures for personal safety based on the guidance in the categories below. Agencies may require a signed copy of an employees' acknowledgement of the procedures which will be kept in the employee file. The health and welfare of employees remain the highest priority. Employees are expected to comply with the following guidelines regardless of vaccination status.

Face Coverings

- Face coverings must always be worn by employees when they are away from their designated workspace (i.e. personal office, cubicle or workstation). This includes, but is not limited to, all common spaces such as break rooms/kitchen areas*, elevators, hallways, bathrooms, and meeting rooms irrespective of physical distance.
 - Employees may utilize break rooms or kitchen areas when a minimum of three (3) feet of distance can be consistently maintained; however, employees must wear a face covering at all times unless actively eating or drinking.
- Face coverings are required in the presence of other individuals at designated workspaces when three (3) feet of physical distance cannot be consistently maintained.
- In situations where cubicles or workstations are unable to be spaced a minimum of three (3) feet apart, face coverings are not required when a person is working alone in the cubicle or workstation. Employees should use face coverings if another individual enters their cubicle or workstation.
- Face coverings must be worn when in a fleet vehicle with another individual.
- Face coverings must be worn by all customers and the public when conducting business in state buildings. Customers who refuse to wear a face covering should be offered alternative methods for services (i.e. web services, phone, etc.), or be politely asked to leave the premises and return at another time.

- Face coverings are not required when outdoors but are encouraged if three (3) feet of distance cannot be consistently maintained.
- Face coverings must fully cover the mouth and nose area and may not have offensive or inappropriate writing or graphics. Management reserves the right to ask employees to replace their face covering if it is deemed inappropriate, unprofessional or unsafe.
- Unless required for law enforcement purposes, employees do not need to wear a face covering if it impedes their vision, if they have a medical condition that prevents wearing a face covering, or if it would create an unsafe condition when operating equipment. Employees shall obtain approval from their supervisor if they are unable to wear a face covering for these reasons. Employees may be asked to use an alternative face covering such as a full-face shield, if appropriate, or may be asked to provide documentation from their healthcare provider if they are unable to wear any face covering for these reasons.

Gloves

- Agencies may provide gloves to employees who require them to perform certain job functions such as handling mail, custodial work, toll collecting, groundskeeping, and other jobs identified by agency management.

Personal Hygiene

It is important that employees continue to adhere to the following guidelines for hygiene, as recommended by the CDC and the Division of Public Health:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for no less than 20 seconds is recommended.
- Hand sanitizer should be used frequently.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Reminders -
 - Avoid touching face
 - Avoid handshakes and hugs
 - Avoid touching frequently used objects and surfaces
 - Avoid sharing cellphones, pens, computers, and work areas
 - Avoid sharing paper and physical objects during meetings

Physical Distancing

Workstations

- Whenever possible, workstations should be arranged to allow separation of three (3) feet, and consideration should be given to arranging seating so that employees are not directly facing each other.

- If this condition cannot be met, consider alternative measures to mitigate potential exposure such as staggered work shifts and/or installation of physical barriers, where practical.

Meetings

- Large group meetings should be held via teleconference or video conferencing when possible.
- When in-person meetings are required, the number of participants should be limited to ensure that the requirement of three (3) feet of physical distancing is maintained, and face coverings are required.

Elevators

- Face coverings are required while using an elevator.
- In order to ensure sufficient distance between elevator passengers, no more than four (4) people should ride the elevator at one time.

Visitors

Some worksites or work requirements include interaction with the public in order to perform business functions. These guidelines should be followed regardless of vaccination status:

- When possible, business is to be conducted by appointment only. If appointments are not feasible, agencies should limit building occupancy in accordance with guidance provided by the Division of Public Health.
- All visitors are required to wear a face covering. If the visitor refuses to wear a face covering should be offered alternative methods for services (i.e. web services, phone, etc.), or be politely asked to leave the premises and return at another time.
- Social distancing of three (3) feet shall be maintained by arranging points of service. Post signs to remind employees and visitors of distancing requirements. For example, use floor tape to indicate where visitors should stand for lines and remove extra chairs to reinforce three (3) feet of distance.
- In situations where distancing cannot be maintained, shields or other barriers should be installed to help prevent exposure.

Traveling in Fleet Vehicles

- Employees should ride alone in fleet vehicles when operationally feasible.
- For situations requiring multiple occupants in a fleet vehicle, all occupants of the vehicle are required to wear face coverings.

- Unless required for law enforcement purposes, employees may not be required to wear a face covering if it impedes vision, if they have a medical condition that prevents wearing the face covering, or if it would create an unsafe condition in operating the vehicle. Employees should obtain approval from their supervisor if they are unable to wear a face covering for these reasons.
- Fleet vehicles maintained in central locations (excluding blocked vehicles) will be issued on a rotational schedule. As a precautionary measure, employees will be provided a disinfectant wipe at the time of pick up to use on the keys, steering wheel and other touch points in the vehicle.
- Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 should report to his/her supervisor if they have recently utilized a fleet vehicle so that sanitizing of the vehicle can occur. Note: Agencies with blocked vehicles will need to ensure that vehicles are properly sanitized and may engage GSS/Fleet Services for assistance, if needed.

Resources

The following resources are available to management and employees regarding leave policies, telecommuting policy, and resources for employee wellness:

- DHR's COVID-19 HR Resources for Executive Branch Employees:
<https://dhr.delaware.gov/covid19/>
- FAQ's for Employees Related to COVID-19:
<https://dhr.delaware.gov/personnel/faq/>
- DHR's Policies and Procedures:
<https://dhr.delaware.gov/policies/>
- State Employee Benefits and COVID-19 Resources:
<https://dhr.delaware.gov/benefits/covid-19>
- CDC Guidance on Wearing Gloves:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/gloves.html>
- Delaware's Response to the Coronavirus Disease Website:
<https://coronavirus.delaware.gov>
- Delaware Public Health State of Emergency Declarations:
<https://governor.delaware.gov/health-soe/>

Employees not complying with the terms and instructions in these guidelines may be subject to discipline.